

# Tween Car Safety Research

*A Qualitative Research Debrief Prepared For:*



# What we'll cover today

## 1. Project Details

- Background & Objectives
- Methodology Review
- Sample Details

## 2. Executive Summary

## 3. Detailed Findings

- Passenger Safety Mindset: Awareness and perceptions around car safety
- Passenger Safety Behavior: The reality of seatbelt compliance and other car safety measures
- Seat Belt Compliance: Triggers, Barriers, Motivations
- Backseat Compliance: Degree of understanding around this safety measure

## 4. Thoughts Moving Forward

- Potential Areas for Further Exploration

## 5. Appendix

- Demographics





# Project Details

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Background, Objectives, Methodology, Sample

# Background & Objectives

## Background

- In 2014, the Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) will launch a national public service advertising campaign that aims to increase the proper use of seatbelts among tweens/teens ages 8-14 and to reduce the injuries and deaths in motor vehicle accidents where these children were not wearing safety seatbelts.
- Parents and caregivers will be encouraged to make sure their children are properly wearing seatbelts and children will be reminded of why it's important to buckle up. In addition, the campaign will also resonate with high-risk populations including African Americans and Hispanics.

## Research Objectives

- Using qualitative research methods, determine the nature and causes on non-use of seat belts among 8- to 14- year olds
- Develop interventions and strategic approaches to increase usage among tweens
- Uncover key insights that will inform creative concept development

# Methodology & Approach

Talk Shoppe conducted 13 focus groups on the topic of 'car safety' and on behalf of NHTSA, The Ad Council, Gotham and Casanova

Fieldwork was conducted across Los Angeles, Dallas and Chicago, over the course of 5 days between September 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, 2013



## **5 parent groups**

- 31 respondents total
- 2 of these groups were conducted with low- to mid- acculturated Hispanic parents



## **8 tween groups (ages 8-14)**

- 37 respondents total
- Groups were split by age group and gender to increase comfort levels



# Executive Summary



# Executive Summary

While parents and tweens understand the importance of wearing seatbelts, compliance is not guaranteed

Seatbelt compliance is challenged by 5 key factors:

- **Distraction:** The majority of parents and tweens use personal technology such as phones, tablets, video games and iPods while driving or riding in the car. We hypothesize that “distractedness” is highly correlated with the de-prioritization of buckling up. When focused on technology and/or generally distracted, drivers and passengers can forget to buckle up and/or choose not to break their focus by taking the time to buckle up.
- **Discomfort:** Among a subset of our audience, there is a perception that seatbelts are uncomfortable. As a result, they are “rigging” their seatbelts and wearing them improperly or not wearing them at all. This is especially true of kids attempting to sleep or “stretch out” in the car. Additionally, few of our tween respondents are using booster seats and therefore even when buckled up, are likely wearing their seatbelts incorrectly.
- **Non-compliant caregivers at the wheel:** When older siblings or non-compliant caregivers drive, seatbelt compliance for their younger passengers tends to drop off precipitously. This is particularly true when tweens are riding with older siblings between 16-18 years old.
- **Nighttime:** At night, there is a propensity for kids to feel a bit more “relaxed” about wearing their seatbelts as they don’t think their parents and/or police can see if they were wearing them or not. Additionally, seatbelt removal results in greater comfort when sleeping.
- **Lack of conditioning:** Parents that have been trained to buckle up transfer this behavior to their children. When there is an absence of conditioning, non-compliance increases. This is prevalent among Hispanic parents that are newer to seatbelt compliance rules and regulations from a habitual standpoint, and also are less educated regarding the benefits.

# Executive Summary

## Fears and consequences associated with not wearing your seatbelt drive seatbelt compliance

Seatbelt compliance is triggered or motivated by:

- **Resonance:** Personal stories detailing the benefits of wearing a belt or pitfalls of not wearing a seat are effective in creating a relatable point of reference for tweens and a genuine feeling that an accident could happen to them.
- **Trepidation:** The fear of “flying out of the window” is an important and consistent fear across the age / gender groups, but seems to be particularly impactful among tween boys. On a smaller scale, there is a fear of hitting the front dashboard or back seat in the case of a sudden stop.
- **Obligation:** While the potential of injury or death is a compelling reason for most tweens to comply, in some cases the potential of their parents getting a ticket is almost more compelling. Many 12-14 year olds and parents cited “seeing the police” as a trigger to remember or a reinforcement to buckle up.
- **Vulnerability:** A sudden stop/ lurch of the car, the feeling of acceleration and/or other changes in momentum in the car will often incite a feeling of vulnerability and remind passengers to fasten their belts.
- **Acquiescence:** Seat belt compliance tends to be higher in the front seat simply because the tweens are more easily observed by parents. Tweens are able to “get away” with more when they are out of their parents’ direct line of sight in the back seat.



# Executive Summary

## Differences observed by sub-segments

- **Rural and suburban** respondents were less concerned with law enforcement than urban respondents
- **Dallas** respondents were the least likely to admit non-compliance; **Los Angeles** respondents were the most likely
- Fully **acculturated Hispanic children** were likely to “police” their less acculturated parents
- **Tweens with younger siblings** were often inspired to comply by a sense of responsibility and the idea of being a “role model”
- Conversely, **tweens with older siblings** were likely to “look up” to them and take their cues on seatbelt compliance
- Compliance is influenced by **car size and passenger load**
  - The more kids there are and/or the larger the vehicle, the harder it is to control compliance
  - Parents aren’t always aware of what’s happening in the back seat, even though they “think” they are



# Detailed Findings





# Passenger Safety Mindset



Awareness and perceptions around car safety

# Car safety is 'wearing your seatbelt'

While car safety encompasses multiple safety measures, wearing your seatbelt is the most top-of-mind

Habitual: Something they do or consider doing daily

Familiar: Something they have always done or been told to do

Clear: Straightforward and easy to understand

Accessible: As all cars have seatbelts / don't need to pay extra

Low Involvement: Easy and doesn't require much 'work'

Popular: Largest communications presence (e.g. "buckle up for safety")

Pervasive: Widely known legal implications (e.g. "click it or ticket")

Salient: At the center of many horror stories (e.g. the person who wasn't wearing their seatbelt was the only one who didn't survive the crash)

## Commonly held beliefs about seatbelts

Target Mindset

# Buckling up can help prevent injury or death in the case of a traffic accident

**You can break your bones if you don't wear your seatbelt.**

8 yr. old boy, Los Angeles

**I feel very vulnerable when I don't have my seatbelt on, and I always reach out for my kids too. I just feel like I could fly out of the window if I don't have it on.**

Los Angeles dad of 8 & 14 yr. old boys



# Commonly held beliefs about seatbelts

Target Mindset

## Smart people wear seatbelts

**I feel smart when I have my seatbelt on.**

9 yr. old girl, Dallas

**I think some people just need to be educated about why it's important**

Dallas mom of 8 & 15 yr. old boys

## Commonly held beliefs about seatbelts

Target Mindset

# Good parents wear seatbelts and make their kids wear their seatbelts

Everybody's parents teach them as children; first they do it for them, then the children pick it up and do it themselves

14 yr. old boy, Dallas

If you want your children to do the right thing, you have to show them by being their teacher.

Chicago mom of a 9 yr. old girl



# Commonly held beliefs about seatbelts

Target Mindset

## Lazy people don't wear seatbelts

When I have to wake up early, I sometimes get lazy and don't put my seatbelt on

14 yr. old girl, Los Angeles

They don't want to keep telling their kids to put it on; the kids say no, they don't want to insist. They have hyper kids, or who knows?

Los Angeles mom of a 10 yr. old



# Commonly held beliefs about seatbelts

Target Mindset

## Distracted people don't wear seatbelts

**Sometimes I get a little carried away when I'm doing something and I forget.**

11 yr. old boy, Chicago

**If you're in a hurry or a rush, you might forget**

Chicago dad of 9 & 12 year old boys

shoppe  
**talk**

# Parent Snapshot

## Target Mindset



Love their kids and want to do what's best for them

Believe that everyone in the car (including themselves) should be wearing a seatbelt

Want to believe that their kids always wear their seatbelts

For the most part, do believe that their kids always wear their seatbelts

Dread the occasions when they have to 'battle' for seatbelt compliance

Most win the battle; others in need of support

# Low- to Mid- Acculturated Hispanic Parent Snapshot

## Target Mindset



Seatbelt safety less ingrained as seatbelt regulations are lacking in their country of origin

Concerned about monetary (tickets) and legal ramifications of not wearing a seatbelt

Scare their kids into wearing seatbelts with stories about the police

Self-abnegation resonates; particularly with mothers (e.g. if you don't want to do it for yourself, do it for your children)

Concerned with creating a successful future for their children and motivated to ensure that nothing impedes their progress

# Tween Boy Snapshot

## Target Mindset



Exhibit riskier behavior

Scared, but also curious about the dangers of not wearing a seatbelt

Want to feel like a “man” and sit in the front seat

Want to spread out and get comfortable in the back seat, which can impede seatbelt compliance

More easily satiated with personal devices; but also more distracted



# Tween Girl Snapshot

## Target Mindset



Careful and thoughtful, concerned about the safety of siblings/friends/parents

Less likely to admit non-compliance than male counterparts

Susceptible to older sibling/teen non-compliance pressure

More likely to complain about seatbelt comfort issues

# Market/Living Area Snapshot

## Target Mindset



Dallas respondents were more mindful/fearful of the legal and moral implications of seatbelt compliance

Los Angeles parents were most likely to admit non-compliance for themselves, particularly low-acclulturated parents

Chicago parents had more weather-related concerns regarding traffic safety

Rural and suburban parents were less concerned with law enforcement, and more relaxed regarding “short” rides



# Passenger Safety Behavior

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The reality of seatbelt compliance and other car safety measures

# Seatbelt Compliance Reality #1



*"My main concern is keeping them quiet so I can focus on driving."*

Chicago Dad  
9 & 12 yr. old boys

- Ensuring that their kids comply with car safety measures often becomes a battle for parents
- Parents have their limits, and self-preservation sometimes trumps common sense/knowledge (e.g. allowing their kids to forgo the seatbelt on the way to school to avoid an argument, or giving them an iPad to play with in exchange for compliance)
- On occasion, parents choose not to "pick this battle" especially when driving short distances and familiar roads
- While many parents feel they have the authority to make their kids buckle up, some feel ill-equipped to win the battle and could use outside support



# Seatbelt Compliance Reality #2



*"Car rides start the night before for me."*

Chicago dad  
10 & 12 yr. old children

- The more hurried and chaotic the pre-travel routine is, the greater the risk that compliance is sacrificed for both parents and children
- Parents believe that maintaining a peaceful atmosphere enables a safer, calmer "pilot"
- To minimize fighting, complaining and crying, parents will allow tweens certain "privileges" such as riding in the front seat, using personal devices and, in some cases, waiving the seatbelt for short rides

# Seatbelt Compliance Reality #3



*"Sometimes I get distracted by my  
iTouch and forget to put on my seatbelt."*

13 yr. old boy  
Los Angeles

- The rise in personal devices contributes to a more distracted car experience and leads to higher levels of non-compliance for both parents and tweens
- When attention is focused elsewhere, some forget to buckle up or see taking the time to buckle up as a hassle or nuisance
- Tween attachment to technology and resistance to interruption likely contributes to and exacerbates the seatbelt battles; conversely, compliance may be rewarded with device privileges

# Seatbelt Compliance Reality #4



*"He always puts his seatbelt on, but doesn't always put both pieces on."*

Dallas mom  
8 yr. old boy

- A subset of parents and tweens perceive wearing a seatbelt as uncomfortable and therefore manipulate them (removing or moving shoulder restraint) or don't wear them at all
- Removing, manipulating, or using multiple seatbelts is more common among tweens attempting to sleep or get comfortable in the back seat
- Among tweens there are many complaints about the fit and placement of seatbelts, likely due to lack of necessary booster seats

# Seatbelt Compliance Reality #5



*"I'm much more cautious on a long trip  
and more concerned with keeping the  
kids occupied"*

Los Angeles Dad,  
5 & 14 yr. old children

- Highway/freeway trips, faster speeds and /or longer distances typically equate to higher seatbelt compliance while surface streets, slower speeds and/or shorter distances are considered lower risk
- Faster speeds are associated with increased danger, and the sentiment is reinforced by prevalent reminder signage such as "Click it or ticket"
- Parents are also less cautious/concerned when traveling familiar routes

# Seatbelt Compliance Reality #6



*"She knows that her mom doesn't play. She knows this is her responsibility and this is what I expect."*

Chicago Mom,  
10 yr. old girl

- The less compliant a parent, the greater the likelihood that the children find ways "around" wearing their seatbelts
- Parents with strict disciplinary styles are the least likely to admit non-compliance
- Tweens are empowered by the idea that they could influence their younger siblings into compliance, and take this responsibility seriously
- Tweens cite high rates of non-compliance when travelling with their older (usually teenage) siblings

# Seatbelt Compliance Reality #7



*"The only time I'll "forget" to put it on is when my mom doesn't look back [to check] and I'm like... YES! I get a 5-second chance to have it off."*

11 year old girl, Los Angeles

- While parents do their due diligence to ensure seatbelt compliance upon departure, some children remove their seatbelts for varying amounts of time without their parents knowing while in transit
- Some tweens put the seatbelt "halfway" on to fool their parents into thinking they were fully belted in
- Tweens describe a feeling of "freedom" when they aren't buckled in and latch on to any opportunity to avoid compliance



# Seatbelt Compliance



Triggers, Motivations & Barriers



## Habit does not always equate to immediate compliance.

Parents and tweens believe that they “habitually” buckle their belts without giving it much thought.

However, they also cite a multitude of triggers that remind them to buckle up; many of which occur in transit.



# Seatbelt compliance “triggers”

- Habit
- Seat belt alarm in the car
- Visuals of law enforcement officers or vehicles
- Parents asking/ telling tweens; or vice versa
- Entry onto the highway/freeway ramp
- A quick or unexpected stop that “reminds” them to fasten their belt



# Seatbelt compliance motivations

- Preventing injury or death in the case of an accident
- Obeying the law
- Avoiding legal fees
- Avoiding disobedience consequences
- Conforming to socially accepted behaviors
- Setting an example to others
- Doing the right thing





Respondents across all groups cite a wide range of barriers to compliance with varying levels of occurrences.

Without observation, it's difficult to gauge how prevalent these barriers actually are, and how often they are occurring.

**Consider how the quantitative research can help us understand the degree at which these behaviors are occurring.**

# SEATBELT COMPLIANCE BARRIERS

	Gen Pop Parents	Hispanic Parents	Tween Boys	Tween Girls	Rural	Suburban	Urban
In a rush	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Inconvenience/ Not in the mood	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Confidence in driver's abilities	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Not enough seat belts		✓					
Improper fit	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Discomfort	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Benefits don't resonate		✓			✓		
Moving around the car			✓	✓			
Rebellion	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Short trip length	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Lack of benefit awareness		✓			✓		
Incompliant driver			✓	✓			
Peer pressure			✓	✓		✓	✓

# Perceptions and feelings around seatbelts

Wearing a seatbelt:

- + Safe, responsible, good
- Trapped, uncomfortable

Not wearing a seatbelt:

- + Free, cool, comfortable
- Uncomfortable, weird, danger, illegal, in trouble, tired, lazy



# Backseat Compliance

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Awareness, understanding and behavior around where  
children under 13 years of age should sit in the car

# Backseat Compliance

- Parents are confused/uninformed about the proper age/weight/height a child should be when riding in the front seat
- The parameters for sitting in the front seat are unclear to parents; there are no easy to remember 'rules of thumb'
- Additionally, tweens question rules and push boundaries that they may have accepted in their younger years. If there is no clear response from the parent, the child perceives this flaw and wins the battle for the front seat



*"If the airbag light goes off, it's OK for them to sit in the front."*

Dallas mom to 13- and 11-year olds

# Backseat Compliance

Parents often associate the transition from the back to the front seat as somewhat of a rite of passage; there is a sense of relief and/or pride when children "graduate" to the front

This rite of passage in the confines of a car is about control and territory (having your own space)

- This is more difficult to achieve in a smaller family car vs. a 7-seater, minivan or SUV in which spaces are much more defined and 'controls' and entertainment are available for kids
- Thus, the allure of the front seat seems greater in smaller, less equipped cars



*"I sit in the middle all the way in the back [putting arms out to the sides] in the third row and from there I can see everything that is going on!"*

*8yr old girl, Dallas*



# Perceptions and feelings around front and back seats

Sitting in the front seat

+ Free, cool, comfortable, good, relaxing

Sitting in the back seat

+ Safe

- Tired, uncomfortable



# Thoughts Moving Forward



Key areas and ideas for further consideration

# Thoughts Moving Forward

## Recommended Approach for Quantitative Exploration

We realize that resources are limited and efforts must be focused. In an ideal world, we'd recommend designing relevant communications efforts against multiple targets.

But we heard loud and clear that seatbelt compliance starts with good role models.

Therefore, we recommend **primarily focusing on parents** in the quantitative study

- Parents should have regular and salient reminders to consistently ensure seatbelt compliance for themselves and for their children
  - While we surfaced many barriers to compliance, we think there's a lot to learn about how pervasive each barrier is across the various subsets (rural/suburban/urban; various ethnic backgrounds, income levels, number of children in the household, etc.)
  - We also recommend talking to a subset of low- to mid-acculturated Hispanic parents to quantify barriers and knowledge gaps
- As a secondary or supplemental focus, we would recommend talking to tweens & teens.
  - Also, although we didn't talk to older teens extensively, we think there is a real need to communicate with this group as well.

# Thoughts Moving Forward

## Top 4 Communications Territories for Quantitative Exploration

### "It could be worse"

- Yes, it's uncomfortable and "boring" to put on your seatbelt, but it could be worse if you don't.

### "It could happen to you!"

- There is a sense of invincibility for parents & tweens, especially when parents have demonstrated "good" driving behavior (i.e. no accidents). Consider reminding them that they need to worry about the "other" guy (i.e. "Mayhem" from the All State commercials).

### Choose your battles

- While it is understood that there are many battles being fought on a daily basis, this is one battle they should chose to fight.

### Empowerment

- Tweens with younger siblings take "setting an example" seriously. Parents can leverage their burgeoning independence and maturity by speaking to them about the importance of showing others how to comply.

# Thoughts Moving Forward

Additional communications territories for further exploration

- Self-abnegation
  - Particularly in the case of low acculturation; if you don't want to do it for yourself, do it for your children and their future.
- Roller Coasters
  - When discussing what they are able to do now, that they couldn't do before, we heard a lot about amusement parks and roller coasters. Consider further exploration around: *You wouldn't dream of letting your child ride a roller coaster without a safety belt.*
- Legal/financial ramifications
  - Parents and tweens consistently cited legal/financial consequences as an effective motivator to continued seatbelt compliance. The financial consequences resonated with lower income groups and/or women

# Thoughts Moving Forward

## Some final thoughts on children under 13 sitting in the front seat

- “Right” of passage vs. rite of passage
  - Many parents associate the transition from the back to front seat with maturity and pride.
  - However, parents need to be further educated about the dangers and risks of putting tweens in the front seat before they are “ready.”
- Taking a stand
  - In terms of backseat compliance, there is so much confusion about what’s the law vs. what’s recommended. The rules should be clear and communicated in a definitive and concise way.
- Positive Peer Pressure
  - Parents learn from other parents, peer pressure is experienced by the kids and the parents. The kids see their friends sitting in the front seat and they want to do the same.
  - Parents are often asking, taking advice, sharing or comparing kids achievements with other parents, this may come into play when it comes to front seat usage for under 13 kids.

# Thoughts Moving Forward

Use technology to your advantage

- Consider the impact of mobile phone reminders, such as mobile apps and text message reminders
- Consider promoting/creating an app to tell parents when/why kids can “graduate” to different levels – perhaps to include details by state, and laws vs. recommendations
- Consider positioning personal device privileges as a reward for safety compliance or as a punishment for non-compliance





# Appendix

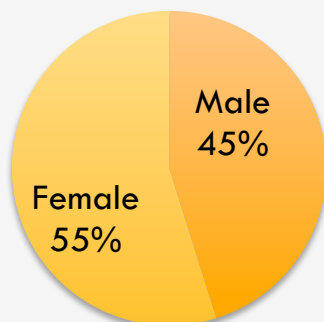


## Demographics

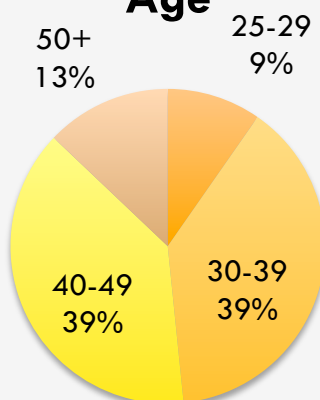


# Parent Composition (31 Respondents)

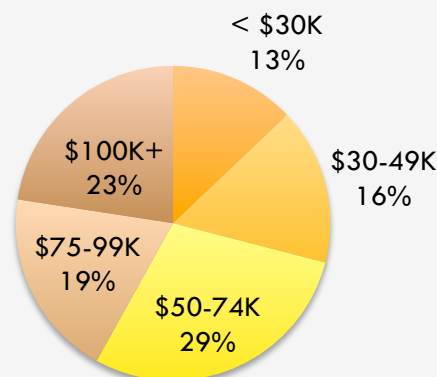
## Gender



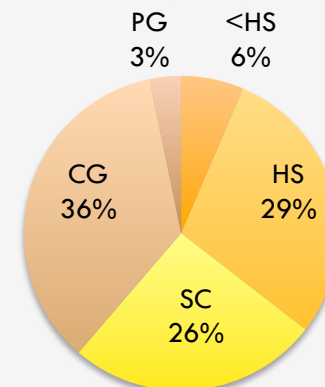
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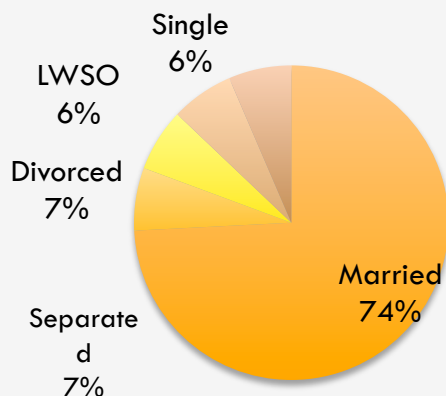
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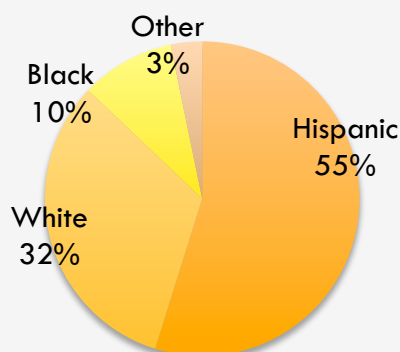
## Education



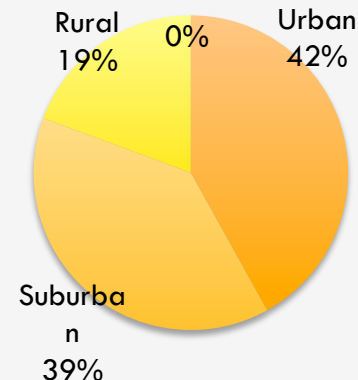
## Parent's Marital Status



## Ethnicity

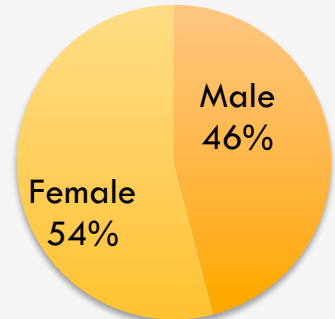


## Living Area

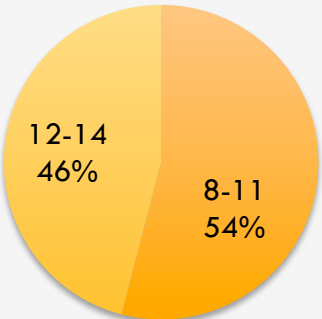


# Tween Composition (37 Respondents)

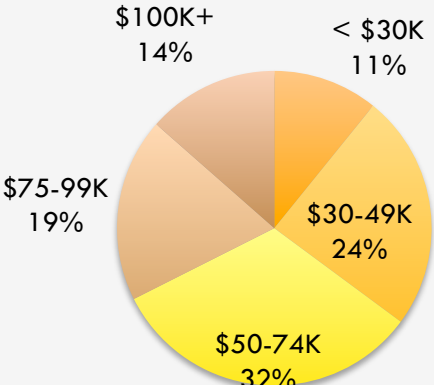
**Gender**



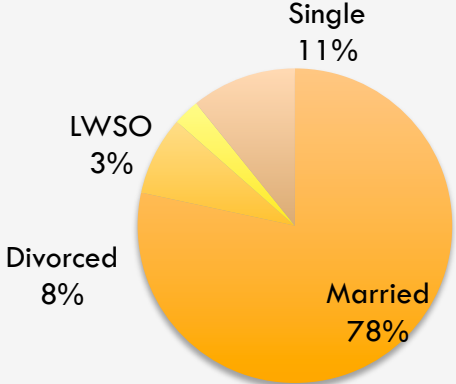
**Age**



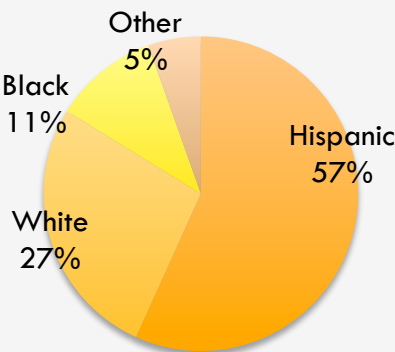
**HHI**



**Parent's Marital Status**



**Ethnicity**



**Living Area**

